



Water Quality Working Group

Work Plan

Issue: Water Quality

Objective:

The working group will discuss the issues facing water quality in Hawai'i, identify gaps in current resource protection efforts, consider water quality mandates in other national marine sanctuaries, and develop potential management recommendations to be considered by the SAC and ultimately presented to sanctuary management.

Description:

Water quality is the chemical, physical and biological integrity of the body of water. Unimpaired water quality is essential to the health of the marine ecosystem and provides a direct benefit to everyone. Water quality in Hawaii is difficult to measure largely due to the absence of a strong monitoring program.

In addition to marine-based point sources of pollution, such as vessel discharges and aquaculture effluent, both point source and non-point sources of land-based pollution have a huge impact on water quality. Some of these sources include wastewater disposal, storm water and agricultural runoff which can all carry pollutants such as nutrients, pathogens, toxic substances (including heavy metals and pesticides), suspended solids and marine debris from urban, residential and commercial activities.

Using chemistry alone to assess the impact of land-based pollutants on ocean water quality can be difficult due to the high variability present in ocean mixing regimes. However, the presence or absence of certain native and invasive organisms, quantity of sediment, level of species diversity, and even habitat rugosity can provide insight into water quality and guidance for future management efforts.

Numerous multi-level governmental authorities manage and/or have an impact either directly or indirectly on water quality; the various laws that deal with this issue are complex. While the authority of the Sanctuary is limited to the marine environment there may be opportunities for raising awareness and filling in existing management gaps, while avoiding duplication of existing conservation efforts.

Method of Communication within the Working Group:

Respectfully acknowledging that each member has a busy schedule and is volunteering their time, the working group will communicate via a combination of e-mail, Go-To-Meeting, and regularly scheduled conference calls on the 4th Thursday of each month unless otherwise noted. Between meetings, members may need to complete various e-mail tasks as assigned. Whenever possible, arrangements will be made so that working group members and members of the public interested observing the meeting or participating in a designated public comment period, may gather at island-specific sanctuary offices.